

7. Pets Keep dogs and many other household pets away from Middle Eastern friends.

8. Beads Fingering beads (akin to Catholic rosary beads) do not of themselves possess religious significance. These worry beads are often nothing more than tension relievers. Yet, they may be used as aides to prayer by some. Lt. Gen. Pagonis used such beads to great benefit during the Gulf conflict.

V. Eating Practices

Expect the actual eating of a meal to come at the conclusion to an evening's festivities. Touch food and pass it with your right hand only. In some areas, Middle Easterners consider it impolite to eat everything on one's plate. Leaving food becomes a symbol of abundance and serves to compliment the host.



VI. General Cautions

During joint-training experiences and coalitions, the following guidance is helpful:

1. Competition Rivalries, where Arab soldiers lose status, can be harmful. Some go as far as to say "fellowship together--train separately".

"To preserve the person's dignity, avoid criticism in front of others...The concept of 'constructive criticism' is truly not translatable into Arabic--forthright criticism is almost always taken as personal and destructive." (Nydell, p. 27.)

In all, remember to be gentle in criticizing Arab partners for something they might have done.

2. Dietary Restrictions These guidelines are similar to those used by American Jewish and Seventh Day Adventist personnel.

3. Communication Allowing your host to initiate discussion topics is a good policy. Expect handshakes from all personnel in a party. Sometimes Arabs use double meanings in conversation, which allows for all parties to feel good and not lose face. Such use shows the practitioner to be a person of culture.

4. Photographs Ask permission before taking photographs. Some Middle East traditions forbid bodily representations. Asking permission demonstrates tact and respect.

5. Planning Long-range planning may be difficult. Tampering with the future may interfere with the "In Sha Allah" (will of God). Commitments beyond a week or so are not as concrete as we may like.

6. Qur'an Chaplain (CPT) Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad, the U.S. Army's first active duty Muslim Imam, gives the following guidance for the use and distribution of the Holy Qur'an.

- Anyone who touches the Qur'an must have clean hands.
- Women undergoing their monthly period should refrain from handling the Qur'an.
- Muslim men and women in need of full bath (ghusl) or ablution (wud'u) should perform these rites prior to handling or reading the Holy Text.
- Keep Qur'ans out of latrines and "Johnny-on-the-Spots" (porta-johns).



- Use a cloth or plastic dustcover for the Qur'an when not in use.
- Keep Qur'an texts on the highest bookcase shelf.
- When reading while sitting on the floor, place the text on a book rest or holder. If no holder is available, hold the Qur'an above the lap or waist.
- Prior to reading the Qur'an, Muslims will often recite the following, "I seek refuge in God from Satan, the rejected enemy [of mankind]."

7. Visiting a mosque The following guidance, adapted from Cultural Orientation Program for Exercises, COPE Jordan, p. 116, assists.

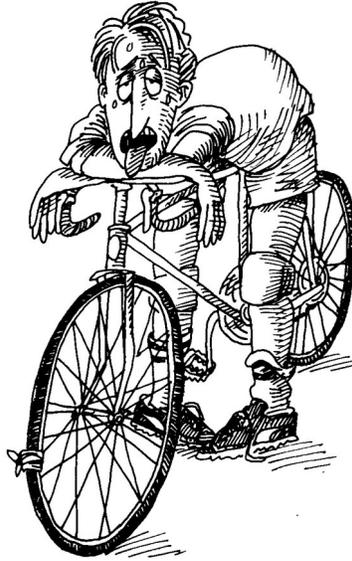
"When you visit a mosque, it is very important that you behave properly and not offend the people who are there to pray. Here are a few do's and don'ts to remember when visiting a mosque:



- *Take off your shoes at the entrance and leave them there before going in. Sometimes oversize slippers are provided for you to put on.*
- *Men should not go into a mosque wearing shorts, and women should not go there wearing short sleeves or sleeveless dresses.*
- *Do not talk loudly.*
- *Do not walk directly in front of people praying.*

- *Do not take pictures of people in a mosque, particularly women.*

- *Mosques are considered to be shelters for homeless people.*
- *Do not be surprised to find mosques without furniture, except for the carpet. The Islamic religion advocates a simple way of life for its followers."*



"Stay Committed"

Vocabulary List: Gestures and Taboos

Face Importance of manner one is perceived by others. All peoples value face to some degree or other.

Golden Rule "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you"

Gus Pagonis Chief logistician during Desert Shield/Storm/Farewell. Wrote Moving Mountains, an account of his experiences in that conflict.

In Sha Allah, (in SHAH ahl-lah) Transliteration of Arabic for "If God Wills..."

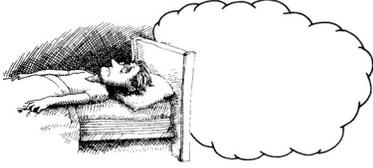
Khalid Bin Sultan Joint Forces Commander during Operation Desert Shield/Storm/Farewell. General in the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces. Wrote Desert Warrior.

Sura (SOO-ruh) Chapter of the Qur'an

T.E. Lawrence British traveler, explorer, military figure and Arabist active in the Middle East during the first part of this century

Ugly Americanism Stereotyped notion of American tourists/travelers common in the 1950s and 1960s. Held that Americans in general were very unconcerned about learning ways of another culture. Often, demonstrations of this callused approach included little concern for the environment (trash and consumerism rampant), mockery of traditional peoples, and rigid lack of desire to learn new ways.

Review Quiz: Gestures and Taboos



Part 1--Multiple Choice Place the letter of the most correct response in the blank provided.

1. _____ What type of touching may be common among Middle Eastern men?
 - A. Long handshakes, grasped elbows, walking hand in hand.
 - B. Fingering another's mustache and beard
 - C. The "high five"

2. _____ Distance (body space) when talking with an Arab is often _____ than that for Westerners.
 - A. farther
 - B. the same
 - C. closer

3. _____ The _____ hand is used to eat, touch and present gifts.
 - A. right
 - B. left

4. _____ When is it best to shake hands with an Arab woman?
 - A. Always
 - B. Never
 - C. Only when initiated by the woman

5. _____ Within much of the Middle East, an evening meal usually comes _____ the night's activities.
 - A. in the middle of
 - B. as the first thing during
 - C. at the end of

6. _____ Roger Axtell, in his book Gestures, describes this "ultimate gesture," known most everywhere and rarely misunderstood.
- A. The firm handshake
 - B. The uplifted palm
 - C. The smile
7. _____ Within most Middle East Muslim circles, a particular conduct is tolerated and accepted if it is
- A. civilized and respectful.
 - B. calculated well in advance.
 - C. accompanied with fear and suspicion.
8. _____ One of the Hadith is
- A. a Muslim should treat others as he [she] would like them to treat him.
 - B. walk softly and carry a big stick.
 - C. the sword conquers all.
9. _____ Within much Arabic practice, giving a warm reception to strangers goes back to the tradition of
- A. the desert environment.
 - B. Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People.
 - C. ethnic warfare.
10. _____ In the Middle East, handshakes are usually
- A. firmer than those of many Americans.
 - B. less firm than those of many Americans.
 - C. about the same strength as those of many Americans.
11. _____ LTG Pagonis, chief Allied logistician during Desert Storm/Shield/Farewell, wrote that the Gulf conflict demonstrated
- A. the value of training in preparing Armed Forces personnel to deal with cultures other than their own.
 - B. ugly Americanism is alive and well.
12. _____ When encountering a new culture, it is best to...
- A. be impulsive, up-front and let-it-all-hang-out.
 - B. practice restraint.
 - C. act shocked and insulted.

13. _____ A _____ approach, free of arrogance and overbearing behavior, often opens the way for agreeable exchange with members of another culture.

- A. boisterous
- B. sincere
- C. direct, confrontive

14. _____ is required to forge alliances with Arab peoples.

- A. Natural ability
- B. Wholehearted effort
- C. Insincere flattery

15. _____ During training experiences, what is the best way to critique a less than stellar performance by an Arab counterpart?

- A. Give constructive criticism in front of peers
- B. Offer no critique at all...live and let live
- C. On a one-to-one level, emphasize positive action, use indirect ways to show how "we" could have done a better job, then emphasize positives again.

16. _____ When taking photographs of people in the Middle East

- A. inconspicuously snap another's picture.
- B. ask permission first...thus demonstrating tact and respect.

17. _____ When touching the Qur'an, it is best to

- A. have clean hands.
- B. rub hands with holy oil before handling.
- C. wear sacred leather gloves.

18. _____ When reading the Qur'an while sitting on the floor, it is best to

- A. place the text on a book rest or holder. If none is available, hold text above the lap or waist.
- B. set text on the rug.
- C. point text towards Jerusalem.

19. _____ Islamic religion advocates a _____ way of life for its followers.

- A. harsh and austere
 - B. simple
 - C. ostentatious and luxurious
-

Part 2--True or False Place a *T* or an *F* in the blank provided.



1. _____ Recognizing the manners, morals, customs, and taboos of another culture is a straightforward and easy matter.
2. _____ Armed Forces personnel can have great confidence in dealing with gestures and taboos due, in part, to the variety of personnel, respect practiced, and courtesies observed in the military.
3. _____ Many Muslims value a demeanor which is nervous and easily angered.
4. _____ Middle Easterners often greet each other with extensive ritual phrases and fixed responses.
5. _____ It is a sign of good taste to ask an Arab Muslim about his wife or female family member.
6. _____ In the Middle East, pointing with one's foot is often a good way to give directions.
7. _____ Within the Middle East, casual posture is a good way to show sincerity and tact.
8. _____ Within the Persian Gulf area, since the Gulf conflict, the thumbs up sign is more readily recognized as a symbol of cooperation for freedom.
9. _____ It is good to introduce your dog to Arab friends.

10. _____ Fingering beads ('worry beads') carry great religious significance for Muslim peoples.
11. _____ For many Arabs, leaving food on the plate can mean a compliment to a host.
12. _____ Many Middle Easterners use double meanings in their conversation which allows all parties to feel good.
13. _____ When not in use, the Qur'an may be covered with a plastic or cloth dustcover.
14. _____ It is good to keep your shoes on when entering a mosque.
15. _____ Mosques are often used as shelters for the homeless.
16. _____ Muslim tradition promotes elaborate furniture and paintings of animals and humans inside a mosque.



"Practice Spontaneity"

Sources Used in Gestures and Taboos

Arab Customs and Culture, second edition, (5th Special Forces Group (ABN) Military Intelligence Company). Clear, easily understood and thorough. Many instructors in DLI's Middle East Schools have access to this text.

Axtell, Roger, Gestures, The Do's and Taboos of Body Language Around the World, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1991). Great information on many major countries around the world. (Aiso Library)

Harris, Philip and Robert Moran, Managing Cultural Differences, (Houston, Texas: Gulf Publications, 1991). Outstanding text on cross-cultural communication from a business person's perspective. The authors give practical guidance for various regions of the world. (Aiso Library)

Middle East Orientation Course, (AD00020T0), United States Air Force Special Operations School. Excellent interviews with Middle East armed forces personnel. Also, much detailed (though less carefully organized than Arab Customs and Cultures) material, is present.

Morrison, Terri, George Borden, Wayne Conaway, Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands.

Saudi-Arabic Headstart Cultural Notes (AN0050S). Well-organized, detailed information. (Aiso Library)